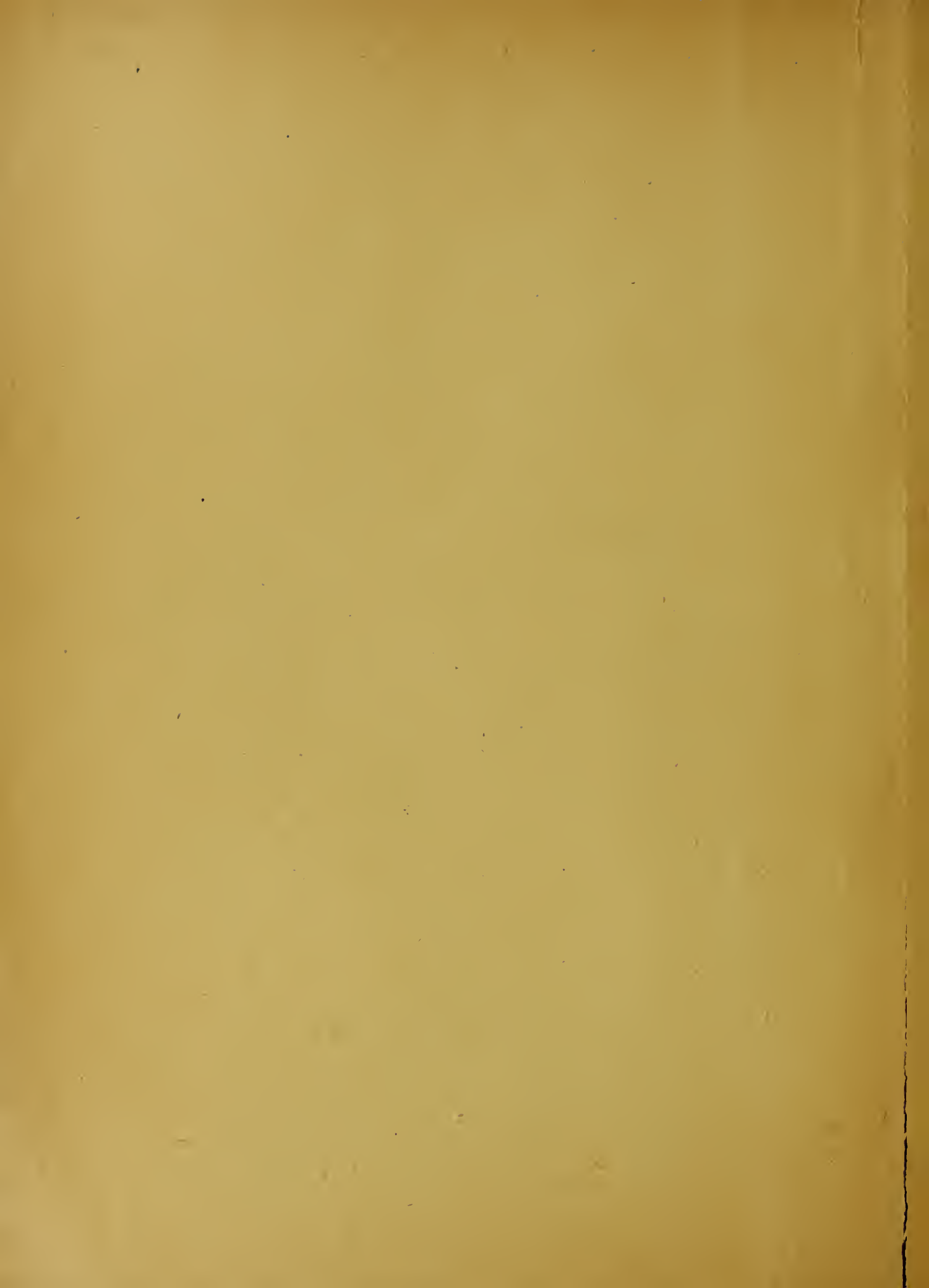


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The Indignation Motive in the English
Sonnet



THE INDIGNATION MOTIVE IN THE ENGLISH SONNET

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

Indignation is a passion calling forth the greatest strength and forcefulness of which a poet is capable. Juvenal's invective on the depravity of the Roman matrons of his day, Dryden's "Mac Flecknoe", and Lord Byron's scathing satire on "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" demonstrate the powers of wrath of which angry poets are capable. In the expression of this feeling in the English sonnet we find all shades of intensity, ranging from the mildest disapprobation of some general topic to the most virulent denunciation of a definite antagonist. The Reverend W. W. Carr gently reproves Folly for its "gestures loose" and smilingly "scorns the smile thy antic shapes create";¹ Frances Butler seeks release from "this loathsome life";² but Coleridge in the height of what he considered righteous indignation bitterly denounces the character and policies of the Younger Pitt in his conduct of the war with the newly founded French Republic.³

Sonnets dealing with religious or political topics are best adapted to the indignant mood. These two influential factors of human life have always affected men most forcibly. Since the beginning of time mankind has suffered unspeakable tortures and burdensome privations for the preservation of religious tenets.

¹ Carr, the Rev. W. W.; "Poems", (ed. 1791, p. 103).

² Butler, Frances Anne; "Poems", (ed. 1844, p. 54).

³ Coleridge, Samuel Taylor; "Complete Poetical Works" Vol. I, (ed. 1912, p. 83).



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Freedom of belief and worship has always been dearer to the zealous than life itself. Therefore, sonnets expressing the poet's deepest feelings on a subject so vital to all thoughtful men are sure to reveal the primeval passions hitherto dormant. Closely associated with the desire for religious freedom has been that for political emancipation. The persecutor in the one case has often been the tyrant in the other; also Petrarch's sonnets, inveighing against the Court of Rome¹, are a mingling of the political with the religious. In fact, in his case, Rome is condemned especially as a corrupt political institution, since the poet was a devout Catholic. The importance of this subject to him causes these sonnets of Petrarch to surpass all of his remaining ones in directness and depth of passion. The same is true of Milton's caustic censure of the greed and bigotry of the Presbyterian Parliament².

The more specific the subject which is treated, the more genuinely fervent will be the quality of indignation expressed. The Piedmont Massacre, presenting a combination of gross injustice in both contemporary religious and political realms, rouses Milton to much greater wrath than Wordsworth feels when he contemplates the Papal encroachment in the England of the sixteenth century. Further, injustices personally felt by the poet are denounced most vehemently. George Boker, an American poet, writes bitterly in 1852 of the foreign opposition to the United States, lamenting the absence of such a sturdy champion¹.

Petrarch, "Sonnets and Other Poems", in translation,
(ed. 1901, pp. 136-142).

2.

Milton, John; "Sonnets", (ed. 1892, p. 159)

of American rights as Andrew Jackson¹; and Lawrence Binyon, a British poet of the present, is able to express such depth of anger at the "Proud War - Lords"². as would be impossible for a sonneteer fifty years removed from contact with German fiendishness. A well known and hated contemporary is usually the target for the poet's most vigorous thrusts. Walter Arensberg knew the ruthless Kaiser of whom he wrote³; had witnessed countless instances of his barbarous cruelty, and could thus write simply and clearly of that monarch's numerous violations of humanity's dictates.

As we have just seen, real indignation in a sonnet can be best found when the poet has personal knowledge of the injustice or the malefactor which he denounces. This restriction alone shows that this verse form is not wholly suited for the expression of indignation, despite Sidney Lanier's assurance of "the capability of the sonnet to sound the whole gamut of human emotion"⁴. Crosland, also expresses disgust for those sonneteers who feel that love alone is suitable for delineation in this verse form. He feels that Wordsworth proved, by his vast variety of sonnets "that the subjects for the sonnet are as numberless and infinite as the subjects for poetry at large, and limited only by the bounds of human emotion and human imagination"⁵. And yet the very poet on whose sonnets he bases this assertion has written three series of Ecclesiastical Sonnets in which indignation

1. Boker, George; "Plays and Poems", Vol. II (ed. 1856, p. 375)
2. Binyon, Lawrence; "Poems on the Great War"; (ed. 1914, p. 14)
3. Arensberg, Walter Conrad; "Idols", (ed. 1916, p. 52)
4. Lanier, Sidney; "Shakespeare and his Forerunners", (ed. 1902, p. 179)
5. Crosland, T. W. H.; "The English Sonnet", (ed. 1918, p. 111)

usually has no more warmth than formal reproof. Therefore, his variety of subjects does not prove the equal adaptability of the sonnet to each and every topic, since the excellence of his own sonnets varies greatly as the subject and mood change.

But there are further, more definite proofs of the inadaptability of the sonnet to the expression of indignation. The feeling of anger is a passion not amenable to rule or limit. Therefore, a verse form of arbitrary length proves a formidable obstacle to its free expression. Adherence to the fourteen line limit of the sonnet requires a sacrifice of feeling to form. The stultifying results of this yielding to regulation may be found in the large majority of such scornful love sonnets as Constable's effusions to "Diana, where the lover complains, with curious satisfaction of his endless hardships, yet the tone of the sonnet reveals no intention on the part of the abused lover to attempt a betterment of his condition. The form and appropriate words are here, but one feels a lack of sincerity. In his "Ecclesiastical" series, Wordsworth denounces the sins of the Roman church of the Middle Ages with the same quality of feeling one shows on the occasion of any trifling annoyance. Some of the most bitter of condemnatory words fall flat because there is little real emotion to sustain them. On the other hand in cases where the poet does not stifle the power of his feelings the form of the sonnet generally suffers. Milton's only tailed sonnet is that entitled "On the New Forcers of Conscience, under the long Parliament"¹.

1. Milton, John, "Sonnets", (ed. 1892, p. 159)

He has allowed his anger to remain dominant, thereby producing an excellent bit of virulent satire, but an irregular sonnet.¹

The intricate rhyme scheme of the sonnet offers even greater obstacles to its use for the expression of indignation. The enraged sonneteer is, of necessity, solely occupied with a burning desire to reveal the depth of his feeling and gives little heed to conformance with the recognized rhyme scheme. One of two results is certain to ensue. The poet may not curb his emotion and may neglect form for the sake of substance, and therefore pour out his feelings in a fourteen line verse scarcely deserving the name of sonnet, as far as rhyme is concerned. Frances Anne Butler's "Away, away! bear me away, away,"² Arensberg's "Am Tag",³ Coleridge's "Pitt",⁴ and Wordsworth's "When looking on the present face of things,"⁵ furnish examples of this marked irregularity in structure. On the other hand, the poets may give due regard to all sonnet regulation and subordinate emotion to form. The result is a vain attempt at the expression of anger.

¹ Of course this sonnet follows the regulations for a tailed sonnet. That form, however, was used especially for satiric purposes by the Italians. This alone would seem to indicate that they found the regular sonnet form unsatisfactory for use in satire.

² Butler, Frances Anne; "Poems", (ed. 1844, p. 54), rhyme scheme, a b a b acca adda ee.

³ Arensberg, Walter Conrad; "Idols", (ed. 1916, p. 52), abba baab cc dd ee

⁴ Coleridge, Samuel Taylor; "Complete Poetical Works", Vol. I, (ed. 1912, p. 83), abba cddc eff e gg.

⁵ Wordsworth, William; "Poetical Works", Vol. II, (ed. 1885, p. 381) abba acca deed ff

Thus, the sonnet fails to perform its mission as a means of expressing indignation, while it is admirably suited for the expression of love. This seeming anomaly can be easily explained when we consider the vast difference between the quality of indignation and that of love. The angry poet desires relief by the immediate expression of his passion and the intensity of that passion renders him oblivious to the various ways of expression. He seeks a simple, direct mode of revealing his

thoughts and thus naturally turns to the rhymed couplet, a form of little technicality and great directness. All the greatest poetical satires in the English tongue follow this form rendered immortal by Dryden and Pope. What could be more direct, more pointed, more biting than these lines from "Mac Flecknoe"?

"Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,
Mature in dullness from his tender years:
Shadwell alone, of all my sons, is he
Who stands confirm'd in full stupidity.
The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
But Shadwell never deviates into sense."¹.

Yet the ardent lover, thrilling with the intensity of a very different passion, seeks to win a hesitant lady by an appeal, attractive in its very form. Therefore, the sheer beauty of the sonnet recommends it for this purpose. We must all admit that no more beautiful, yet sincere, love lyrics exist than such series of love sonnets as those of Shakespeare, Sidney, and

1. Dryden, John; "Poetical Works", Vol. I (ed. 1855, p. 295)

Spenser. The sonnet has become justly famed as a vehicle for the expression of love, not anger.

In their attempt to use the sonnet form for the expression of the motive of indignation, English poets have written of widely varied subjects. Among them we find renouncing of mistresses, arraignment of literary opponents, disgust with life in general, and many bitter denunciations of religious and political enemies. We will consider first those groups of sonnets revealing the least real indignation and will conclude with the sonnets betraying the strongest personal antagonism, those dealing with religious and political differences.

CHAPTER I.

Love Sonnets Expressing Indignation.

In considering the various classes of English sonnets which express indignation, we will start with the love sonnets. Such a course seems advisable for two reasons. In the first place, the Sonnet connotes to the average mind, some sort of pretty love verse. This subject matter is naturally most familiar to students of the sonnet because all the prominent sonneteers of every age have written almost exclusively of love. Secondly, it is best that we should consider the love sonnets first because as a class, they are the least adapted to the expression of indignation. Any suggestion of indignation as a motive in a love sonnet seems almost an anomaly. And this apparent paradox is strengthened by the comparatively slight evidence of any actual indignation discoverable in the love sonnets, in comparison with those on other subjects.

Among the few poets who have written love sonnets with a note of indignation we find the father of sonneteers, Francesco Petrarch. His influence on English sonneteers has been so great that it is necessary that we should study the quality of indignation expressed in his sonnets. It is true that the vast majority of the three hundred and seventeen sonnets which comprise the two series celebrating Laura express the deepest love and the most persevering devotion to the lady, whom he had no hope of winning. Yet there are three which register dissatisfaction at Laura's coldness of heart. In Sonnet VI his mood is that of disgust for

his own perserverance in a courtship that appears entirely hopeless. He is just beginning to realize the folly of further endeavor and censures the weak will power which does not enable him to renounce his heartless mistress. With bitterness of heart he confesses that Love's power exceeds that of his rational self.

"Nor aught avails to check or to excite,

For Love's own nature curb and spur defies".¹,

Still in complaining mood, he writes Sonnet XLIV. He has now come to a much clearer realization of his pitiable condition. He has ceased to expect "that Love, or my Lady, right wisely,

Leave to conspire against me wrongfully"².

Nevertheless, his tone is even now petitionary; he continues to entreat rather than to demand. His sense of injury grows ever stronger, but his determination does not increase proportionately. Yet one feels that there can be but one conclusion, the suitor will finally be inflamed by manly anger and determine to end his too humble quest. And, in Sonnet LXI, we discover a tone of determination new to the poet. Even now he shows little anger; only in increased firmness do we find a change from the preceding sonnets. He intends to leave the lady unless she relents. At the conclusion, his latent anger apparently rises and in solemn tone he warns her,

"If otherwise you seek for to fulfil

Your wrath, you err, and shall not as you ween;

And you yourself the cause thereof have been."³.

1. Petrarch, "Sonnets . . . and Other Poems", in translation, (ed. 1901, pp. 5-6)
2. Ibid, pp. 58-9.
3. Ibid, p. 84.

As we have seen, Petrarch's first step, which later led towards his determined opposition to his lady's cruelty, was that of discontent with his condition and condemnation of his own weak will. Similarly in W. S. Blunt's *Vanitas Vanitatis* the poet laments the "lame, impotent conclusion to youth's dream".¹ As in Petrarch's Sonnet VI, the poet feels dismay and sadness at the fruitlessness of youth's designs. Throughout the sonnet runs a spirit of fatalism which, combined with its lack of definiteness, distinguishes it from that of Petrarch.

On the contrary, some of Sir Thomas Wyatt's sonnets differ from his Italian master's productions, because they express true indignation. The former expresses, in two of his sonnets², the bitter realization of the hopelessness of his suit and, with a slight display of anger, threatens to leave the lady unless she relent. This is exactly the stage of feeling which marks the climax of Petrarch's indignation. Yet Wyatt advances beyond this point and in his sonnet "A renouncing of love"³, expresses a cold firmness of intention and a set, grim contempt for Love and its charms which are entirely un-Petrarchian. The mature man, himself safely past the romantic age, jeers at the powers exerted over the young by Love. As for himself, he boastfully asserts that such weighty matters as the philosophy of Seneca and Plato alone in-

1. Blunt, Wilfrid Scarven; "Love Sonnets of Proteus", (ed. 1881, p. 53)

2. Wyatt, Sir Thomas, the Elder; "Tottel's Miscellany" Arber reprint London 1870, pp. 34 & 71.

3. Wyatt, Sir Thomas, the Elder; "Tottel's Miscellany" Arber reprint London 1870, p. 70.

terest him. He admits his youthful indiscretions, but now feels that he is on safe ground and accordingly ridicules Love without mercy. The tone throughout is that of a cynical man gazing back with mingled jest and anger at the happenings of his youth.

This scorn of Love in general is often directed against a certain mistress. W. S. Blunt accuses Manon of vanity.¹

The tone of the piece is wrathful scorn evoked by the discovery that the lady upon whom he has lavished his affections so freely is flattered by the notice of the vulgar crowd, and even makes undignified advances in order to gain their applause. It is

with a like realization of disenchantment that "The Vow"² satirizes the fickle maiden who, after most solemn vows to remain faithful, soon tires of her ardent lover. The mood of the poet is one of weary disgust and contempt for those who lightheartedly swear the most serious oaths - and break them with as little concern.³ Disgust and contempt have ripened

into indignation in Shakespeare's condemnation of the dark lady, Sonnet #152.⁴ Pure anger, biting irony, and almost brutal jest vie with one another throughout the sonnet. In angry mood the poet upbraids the lady for failing to keep her love vow, but

¹ Blunt, Wilfrid Scarven; "Love Sonnets of Proteus" , (ed. 1881, p. 8).

² Stevens, The Rev. W. B.; "Poetical Register", Vol. V, (ed. 1807, p. 390).

³ Somewhat in similar vein, though more general in application, is Sidney's Sonnet XXIV in the "Astrophel and Stella" series. Here the neglectful or cruel husband is satirized with strong language but little emotion.

⁴ Shakespeare, William; "Sonnets" (Tudor edition) (ed. 1913, p. 154).

then remarks ironically that he is more foresworn than she. He has taken oaths affirming her kindness, love, truth, and various other excellent attributes and he has lied each time, since she possesses none of these qualities. The lady has none of the virtues he had attributed to her and, unlike many other false mistresses, she also lacks beauty, so he declares in the conclusion of his scathing denunciation.

This sonnet is thus the only truly indignant love sonnet of all that we have cited. Moreover, the existence of this one specimen is more to be marvelled at than is the lack of more of the same type. The widely different characteristics of the emotions of love and of indignation make combination practically impossible. Furthermore, the poet who has once expressed genuine love for his lady finds that no chain of incidents, however cruel, can change his pure love to pure hatred. This may efface the intensity of his passion supplanting it with indifference or forgetfulness but rarely with real indignation. Therefore, love sonnets expressing anger are few indeed, and we can with all justice conclude that this class of sonnets, at least, is in no way suited for the expression of indignation.

CHAPTER II.

Literary Sonnets Expressing Indignation.

As we have seen, a sonnet primarily concerned with love is not likely to show much evidence of indignation. We will find much more evidence of this passion in sonnets dealing with works and their authors. Literary men are often unmercifully frank in their criticism of one another, and in such criticism they frequently employ satire. Jealousy also plays a leading role in the fostering of contempt and indignation towards his contemporaries in the mind of the sonneteer. Envy is the primary cause for satirical denunciation of another. This jealousy may possibly develop later into an actual contempt for the opponent. Indignation is a further development of these emotions. A rather perceptible tinge of this envy of more famous poets is noticeable in George Darley's sonnet "To Poets". We find in this poem a conflict between the jealousy which the poet instinctively feels towards "the choice minions of the proud-lipt Nine",¹ and the tone of calm indifference which he attempts to maintain. Although he asserts his unconcern for the plaudits of the world declaring that he does not seek to "play the public swain", every word thrills with the hatred begot of envy. His words assert a cold indifference

1. Darley, George; "Complete Poetical Works", (ed. 1907, p. 421)

towards his more renowned brethren, but his tone and mood proclaim a frenzied jealousy of their greater fame. In somewhat similar vein Thomas Hood writes of "False Poets and True". He speaks, in more general fashion, of the beauty of a true poet's song which, he angrily declares, is seldom heard above the general tumult because

"The noisy day is deafen'd by a crowd
Of undistinguish'd birds, a twittering race"¹.

With perfect candor he terms the obnoxious songsters who have won the popular plaudits "a twittering race" rather than the doubtful compliment of "choice minions of the proud-lipt Nine". In concluding, he relieves his indignant mood by a Parthian shot at the boisterous poets whose tawdry productions crowd out true works of merit in the glamor of the day. In the profound silence of night and early morn we can be refreshed by the clear notes of lark and nightingale.

This remorseless vigor with which the poets denounce the charlatans within their ranks is equally pronounced in their attacks on those without who sneer at the true beauty of poetry. Here, once again, we find Petrarch presenting a worthy model for later sonneteers. Sonnet VII reveals the poet in censorious mood, grimly surveying the growth of vice and the decline of all virtue. Very naturally, so he observes, in such a time as this the poets are sneered at by the vulgar, money-mad crowd. What a depth of feeling, anger blending with pity, are in these lines:

1. Hood, Thomas: "Works", Vol. I, (ed. 1858, p. 306)

"And those whom Helicon's sweet waters please,
From mocking crowds received contempt alone.
Who now would laurel, myrtle wreaths obtain?
Let want, let shame, Philosophy attend!
Cries the base world, intent on sordid gain."¹.

In this sonnet we find a lofty contempt for the base and a vigorous hatred for those whose dullness leads them to ignore and then abuse true poets. Later poets have often assumed unto themselves the defence of their art with varying degrees of success, although none has approached in vigor and force the model set by the master. We will consider only two which seem to reveal the clearest strain of indignation. Among the fugitive pieces collected in the "Poetical Register" is one urging poets to ignore their detractors. In contemptuous scorn the sonneteer declares that dull wretches, spoiled heirs, and misers can be expected to deride "the votaries of the lyre, to Heaven allied".² But his anger is not altogether without hope; he decides that when these detractors of his profession are dead and forgotten, the poet's fame will be mounting higher and higher. This suggestion of the eternizing powers of verse recalls to mind the almost endless sequences of the last decade of the sixteenth century in all of which this theme was stressed.³

In our last example of this group of sonnets the emphasis

1. Petrarch, Francesco: "Sonnets, Triumphs, etc." (translation) p. 7.
2. Davenport, Richard Alfred; "Poetical Register" Vol. VII (ed. 1812, p. 167). The sonnet is signed R. A. D.
3. This "eternizing power of verse was stressed by Shakespeare, Sidney, Spenser and Drayton as well as by such minor sonneteers as Barnes, Constable, and Griffin.

is localized to a greater extent than in any of the others.

David Reeve Arnell,^{1.} a poet of the Middle West, in a spirit of courageous defiance and boundless determination, exhorts aspiring rhymers to disregard their deriders and honor their Fatherland with verses. He feels a deep contempt for those who cast aspersions on poetry and sarcastically terms their disapproval "the low scorn of fools whom we detest". But his feeling of anger appears to give way before his buoyant hopes for the future of his "glorious West". In consequence, this sonnet is more expressive of exultation than of indignation.

Although the sonnets with which we have just been dealing are somewhat general in subject matter and application, we have found in some of them a not inconsiderable element of indignation. We will discover that this emotion is yet more prevalent in those sonnets which deal with definite literary men and their works. In them we find the personal element predominant thereby encouraging directness of speech with little formality. This strict limitation of the subject of the satire to one man leads the poet to indulge in pointed thrusts. He discards all generalities and often seizes upon ridicule as a likely weapon for the complete humiliation of the satirized one. Under such conditions invective flourishes and the most vigorous satires of the English tongue are written. Thus Pope chooses that servile mediocrity, Colley Cibber then poet laureate, for the hero of his "Dunciad". The ridicule in these lines is hardly to

1. Arnell, David Reeve; "Fruit of Western Life",
(ed. 1847, p. 135)

be surpassed. The Goddess Dulness is seeking a successor and looks with favor on Cibber.

"She eyed the bard, where supperless he sate,
And pined, unconscious of his rising fate;
Studious he sate, with all his books around,
Sinking from thought to thought, etc.
Days, form'd by nature stage and town to bless,
And act, and be, a coxcomb with success.
Dulness with transport eyes the lively dunce,
Rememb'ring she herself was Pertness once.
Now (shame to fortune!) an ill run at play
Blank'd his bold visage, and a thin Third day:
Swearing and supperless the hero sate,
Blasphemed his gods, the dice and damn'd his fate;
Then gnaw'd his pen, then dash'd it on the ground,
Sinking from thought to thought, a vast profound
Plunged for his sense, but found no bottom there,
Yet wrote and flounder'd on, in mere despair." 1.

The poet indulges in a sharp rap at this mock hero's plagiarism.

"Next o'er his books his eyes began to roll,
In pleasing memory of all he stole,
How here he sipp'd, how there he plunder'd snug,
And suck'd all o'er, like an industrious bug.
Here lay poor Fletcher's half-eat scenes, and here
The frippery of crucified Moliere
He roll'd his eyes that witness'd huge dismay,
Where yet unpawn'd much learned lumber lay;" 2.

1. Pope, Alexander; "Complete Poetical Works", Vol. II
2. (ed. 1848, pp. 262-3)
Ibid, p. 263.

In somewhat unfavorable contrast to these examples of the use of the heroic couplet in satire we have Thomas Edwards's sonnets on Bishop Warburton and his editions of Shakespeare and Pope. The sonnet commencing "Tongue-doughty Pedant" reveals a tone of scornful condescension. Edwards feels the greatest contempt for a bungling critic so little conscious of his own defects as to attempt the criticism and emendation of the works of an acknowledged master. The impudence of the critic rouses the sonneteer to yet more scathing satire in this advice:

"Know thy own strength, and wise attempt no more;

But lowly skim round Error's winding shore

In quest of Paradox from Sense refined." ¹.

The following sonnet ² shows the poet in another shade of anger. Now he is roused to wrath by the injustice done to Shakespeare's works by "that bold man" ³. It is his disgust at this awkward desecration of the choice gems of a peerless master which causes him to write in defence of that genius. ⁴. Of course his scorn and detestation of the luckless critic is blended with his wrath at Shakespeare's abuse, and here, again, a very personal vituperation is at all times apparent. Edwards's abusive invective increases in the latter portion of the sonnet and his anger is changed from that of righteous indignation to partisan narrowness.

1. Edwards, Thomas; "Canons of Criticism, (ed. 1750, p. 14).

2. Ibid, p. 174.

3. Similar in mood are the "Sonnets to Three Ladies in the 1765 edition of "Canons of Criticism" pp. 7, 8 & 16.

4. Edwards was not alone in his condemnation of Warburton's notes and commentary on Shakespeare. In Bohm's "Lowndes" Part 8, (1863) 2260: "Shakespeare" it is thus characterized "This edition, founded on Pope's, is thought to be the worst of all, and was never esteemed."

Only a few years after the edition of Shakespeare by Warburton which occasioned Edwards' sonnets of wrath, the doughty Bishop published an edition of Pope's works with a Commentary & Notes¹. Pope had become a great friend and benefactor to Warburton and left him the copyright on all his works at his decease in 1744. Edwards' two sonnets concerning this edition reflect, of course, the anger of a sane critic at the utter butchery of a great production,² but they also reveal the savage joy with which a bitter partisan greets the false steps of an opponent. Here, again, the two sonnets reveal two widely variant dominant moods of the sonneteer. In Sonnet XXVI³ Edwards as a critic and lover of good literature is justly angered by the realization that Pope, as well as Shakespeare, has been grossly misconstrued and misinterpreted by an utterly incompetent, careless critic⁴. Yet personal animus towards that critic is responsible for many of the pointed jibes with which the sonnet is so liberally bestrewn. Edwards' hatred for Warburton, rather than his critical disapproval of the latter's judgment as a commentator, forms the substance of Sonnet XXXII which is addressed to Warburton, himself⁵. The opening lines clearly reveal this excessive personal dislike.

1. Warburton's edition of Pope with Commentary & Notes was published at London in 1751.
2. Joseph Warton characterized Warburton's notes on Pope as "Conceited, futile, and frivolous" in his own edition "Pope's Works", Vol. III p. 158.
3. Edwards, Thomas; "Canons of Criticism", (ed. 1765, p. 332).
4. Edwards' denunciation of Warburton's edition of Pope is no whit more scathing than Byron's contemptuous summary of Bowles' edition of the same poet as expressed in "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers", Vol. VII, (ed. 1832, p. 247).
5. Edwards, Thomas; "Canons of Criticism, (ed. 1765, P. 338).

"Born in luckless hour, with every Muse
And every Grace to foe! What wayward fate
Drives thee with fell and unrelenting hate
Each choicest work of Genius to abuse"?^{1.}

His vengeful spirit drives him to another stroke, a master one.
He bitterly reminds Warburton that he has already been guilty of
a heinous crime in despoiling Shakespeare

"Whom impious Lauder blushes to accuse".^{2.}

Judged as a whole, this sonnet leaves practically nothing unsaid
which the bitterest opponent could have seized upon.

The partisan character of the preceding sonnet is also
found in William Mason's Sonnet XI^{3.} It reveals the polemical
character of the poet. In it his attitude is that of a man who,
ridiculed for a position which he has assumed on some question,
feels obliged to defend his stand by any measures, fair or foul.
His mood, as revealed here is a curious mixture of fear and
anger aroused by opposition. In Sonnet XI he seeks retaliation
for disparaging comments on his views of proper English gardening.
In his anger his opponents become "two Arcadian squires"^{4.} and
their objections to his views are answered by the accusation that
they "prate of Picturesqueness". The lack of solidity and seriousness

1. Edwards, Thomas; "Canons of Criticism", (ed. 1765, p. 338)
2. This insinuation that Warburton has been even less scrupulous than the "impious Lauder" would be considered a very telling blow in literary quarters. William Lauder (d. 1771) was a literary forger of the lowest type. He was guilty of countless falsehoods, and attempted to prove by garbled quotations that Milton was guilty of incessant plagiarism from Greek and Latin authors.
3. Mason, William; "Works", Vol. I, (ed. 1811, p. 132)
4. This sonnet is doubtless a reply to Sir William Chambers and Richard Knight. Both had opposed the ideas expressed in Mason's "English Garden" published 1772-82.

so apparent in the sonnet are tokens of similar frivolity of tone in the mind of the poet. Of much greater seriousness is Sonnet XIII¹. inspired by the poet's real anger at what he deems disrespect and, worse, immorality in a long didactic poem of a contemporary². Mason has thrust aside petty annoyances and is now dealing with problems which seem fundamentally important to him. The poet's righteous wrath is aroused by Knight's exposition of the details of the heathen worship of Priapus. In the modern mind these rites would naturally seem improper, if not absolutely obscene. This note of deep seriousness and sternness of purpose raises this sonnet to a level far above that of the petty, almost childish bickering of the preceding one.

The sincerity and deep seriousness of Masons' Sonnet XIII serve as an introduction to our study of Milton's sonnets in which, however, those good qualities are greatly intensified. We are now considering the sonnets of a man in whose every production we find reflected his lofty spirituality and firmness of purpose. The first³ of the two sonnets denounces those narrow-minded Puritans who opposed Milton's views on divorce. Milton felt morally certain that his position was the only correct one, and therefore classed his opponents as ignorant fools or else conscious antagonists to real progress. His bitter scorn of these men adds increased vigor to each line.

1. Mason, William; "Works, Vol. I, (ed. 1811, p. 134)

2. Mason considered Richard Payne Knight's comment on Gray in the "Progress of Civil Society", 1796 Book III p. 65 as presumptuous. Mason also considered Knight's "Discourse on the Worship of Priapus" degrading and obscene.

3. Milton, John; "Sonnets, (ed. 1892, p. 147)

The people find "Tetrachordon"^{1.} a most peculiar, unpronounceable word but such discordant, guttural combinations as Colkitto or Macdonnel are pleasing and natural. Thus he flays their provincialism and egotism. The following sonnet^{2.} on the same general topic is written in yet more savage mood. He has merely championed the cause of the people by attempting to restore their ancient rights -

"When straight a barbarous noise environs me
Of owls and cuckoos, asses, apes and dogs"

His wrath causes him to apply all manner of opprobrious terms to his detractors. Further angry contemplation of their stupidity convinces him that he is really more to blame than they, since

"this is got by casting pearl to hogs;

That bawl for freedom in their senseless mood."

In these two sonnets of Milton a touch of real indignation appears. Thomas Edwards writes contemptuously of an aspiring critic. Mason's sonnets reveal partisan denunciation and formal reproof. Disapproval and scorn may produce sonnets of some intensity but clearness of vision united with that emotional fervor which is inseparable from true indignation is only to be found in those few sonnets of a poet of penetration and feeling who has been roused to such a pitch of wrath that he must seek relief by utterance of his sentiments. Milton's

1. The tract "Tetrachordon", a justification of divorce by quotations from four texts of Scripture, was published in 1645 and Sonnets XI and XII were composed a few months later.

2. Milton, John; "Sonnets" (ed. 1892, p. 153).

Sonnets XI and XII are imbued with this spirit. Therefore they alone, of all the various satiric sonnets of this group, can be classed as sonnets revealing the indignation motive.

CHAPTER III.

Sonnets Expressing Disgust or Hatred of Life.

A feeling of vague unrest, a sense of disappointment at many of the phases of life, and, finally, an uncontrollable impulse to escape from such an existence as this, - all these states of feeling are found in the sonnets expressing the poet's dislike of life and the conditions which it imposes. In such a group of sonnets as this, we are certain to discover more sonnets revealing emotion almost hysterical than real indignation. As the poets ponder over such ever present questions as life, death, the Deity, and external nature their tone of anger or bitterness is usually softened by an instinctive awe. Most of the situations portrayed in this series of sonnets are such in which man is the victim of circumstances. Yet they affect him vitally and are therefore often in his thoughts. Those abstract qualities over which he has control such as Folly, Vanity, etc., he flays without hesitation. But, when the poet considers the natural processes whose course he cannot alter one jot, his mood is to a great extent reverential. Even if his emotions have been roused to a high pitch, his tone is inclined to be one of overwrought hysterical emotionalism rather than of indignation.

The first emotion which we find expressed in this group is that of mild disapproval of certain abstract qualities which are universally recognized as foibles or faults, not actual vices.

In the tone of the serious-minded student, the Rev. W. Carr orders Folly to be gone¹. The mood of the poet is that of a mild distaste for frivolity but there is no wrath, no rhetorical denunciations. The poet is surprised that such a heedless creature as Folly should venture to win such a quiet man as he. With a very slight tinge of derision, in all good humor, he orders Folly to depart and cease to tempt him.

"Forbear, my brow thy laurels lewd denies,
And scorns the smile thy antic shapes create;
Of thee unenvious, and the gaudy prize
Within thy costly chariot's glittering state,
I sing, and as my fancy tow'ring flies,
Mark the proud splendor of my loftier fate". 2.

In similar good natured vein, but giving evidence of a delicate, though pointed satire, is the Rev. W. B. Stevens' sonnet on Sculpture.³ The poet, in a mood of mingled mirth and disgust at the thought of the customary extravagantly ridiculous sculpture on tombstones, begs that reason and simplicity may be kept in mind by the stone cutter who shall some day work on his funeral monument. The following lines exhibit a note of satire which is definite but not bitter.

1. Carr, the Rev. W.; "Poems, (ed. 1791, pp. 103-4).
2. Carr, the Rev. W. W.; "Poems, (ed. 1791, pp. 103-4).
3. Stevens, the Rev. W. B.; "Poetical Register, Vol. V, (ed. 1807, p. 391)

"Let thy taught chissel from my tombstone spurn
All dove-wing'd cherubs with fat baby faces,
And Christian Faith squat by a Roman urn".

This view of jesting satire deepens into a less agreeable tone in Arnell's denunciation of "Bigotry".¹ He is considering a human trait which he finds thoroughly repulsive to his own feelings. Therefore, the sentiment expressed throughout the sonnet is one of scorn and defiance². He calls Bigotry by the name of the one eyed giant of the Odyssey, Polypheme, and bitterly assures it that: "Thou canst oppress God's sons but for a time,

And with his hapless souls fill up thy maw -

What moment they but rouse in Faith sublime,

Thou in their grasp art as a withe of straw".

In precisely the same vein Anna Seward writes her sonnet on "Ingratitude".³ Despite the very apparent extravagance in diction, this sonnet reveals the deep sincerity in the poet's mood at the time of writing it. She, like Arnell, scorns and loathes the vice on which she is writing an invective. In fact, the intensity of the repugnance which she expresses seems to indicate more of a personal note than we have found in the preceding sonnets.

The genuineness of her detestation for Ingratitude is attested by these lines:

"Thy victims rove

Unquiet as the ghost that haunts the grove

¹ Arnell, David Reeve; "Fruits of Western Life", (ed. 1847, p. 179)

² Hypocrisy is denounced in similar manner by Sir Aubrey De Vere in his sonnet entitled "The Right Use of Prayer"
"Sonnets of 19th Century", (ed. William Sharp, p. 53)

³ Seward, Anna; "Sonnets", (ed. 1799, p. 16)

Where Murder spilt the life-blood -

O! thy dart

Kills more than Life, - e'en all that makes Life dear."

The same spirit of loathing pervades Florence Earle Coates' sonnet on War.¹ As in the case of the two preceding sonneteers, the poet's mind is filled with horror at the thought of War. Her antagonism against it is so pronounced and so violent that she can scarcely choose words sufficiently forceful and suggestive for the expression of her feelings. For example -

"The serpent - horror writhing in her hair,
And crowning cruel brows bent o'er the ground
That she would crimson now from many a wound,
Medusa-like, I seem to see her there -
War! with her petrifying eyes astare -"

Her horror of battle so fills and predominates her mind that she freely attributes to it all the evils of man-kind. "She brings shame

Betraying them that die and them that slay
And making of the earth a hell of pain!"

Nature's cruelty towards man is depicted with equal feeling by Emily Pfeiffer.² The poet's mind has suffered a complete disillusionment, no Romantic Pantheistic notions of external Nature linger in her thoughts. Her feelings are saddened and depressed by the realization that Nature is no fairy godmother watching

¹ Coates, Florence Earle; "War Verse" (ed. 1918, p. 234)

² Pfeiffer, Emily; "Sonnets of 19th Century", (ed. William Sharp p. 161)

tenderly over man.¹ And her anger is aroused by what seems to her almost malice aforethought. The intensity of her emotion on this topic leads her to conceive of Nature as a vast power ruthlessly working evil. As such she upbraids this unseen force with great vigor and severity. Nature is not only

"restless as the ocean,

Filling with aimless toil the endless years - "

it is a "Blind Cyclops, hurling stones of destiny,

- working bootless ill,

In mere vacuity of mind and will."²

This fierce spirit of resentment against the unalterable course of events in this world rises to the highest degree of emotion in the Rev. William Allen's sonnet on "Miserable Old Age."³ In utter disgust and despondency the poet looks back over the course of life through which man must pass. In his angry, dejected mood he can see no good along life's course. Fruitless labor and sorry disillusionment await one at every turn. It seems apparent that we have a personal note throughout. His own disappointments and sufferings naturally affect his outlook on life. This sad, reflective mood is revealed in these lines:

"Our cares are vain; the good is never won;

Sweet joys are fleeting as the meteor's light;

¹ Matthew Arnold in his Sonnet "To an Independent Preacher" (Oxford edition, p. 60) characterizes Nature as cruel, stubborn, and fickle concluding - "Nature and man can never be fast friends".

² "Sonnets of 19th Century", (ed. William Sharp, p. 162)

³ Allen, William D. D.; "A Book of Christian Sonnets" (ed. 1860, p. 14).

But the dismal tone in which the poet relates the sorrows and disappointments of mid-life deepens tragically when he comes to survey the close of man's existence on earth. The pervading bitterness of these concluding lines is such as renders comment superfluous.

"Backward from long ascent we turn the eye,
If haply the review may cheer the heart;
The graves of those we love heave through the way.
Forward we gaze: thick mists obstruct the sky,
But precipice is near, from which we start;
Yet naught remains but down to slide and die!"¹

Intensity of feeling, as we have seen, has been a prominent characteristic in the preceding sonnets. Although the sonnets have dealt with general topics and often in an impersonal fashion, yet they have not lacked force and power. However, the personal touch which is common to the sonnets now to be considered will add directness and increased vigor to the sentiments expressed in them. These sonnets disclose the intimate personal reaction of the poets to the varied circumstances confronting them. After Laura's death, Petrarch² looks back over his past years with bitter grief. He feels that all is lost and that the future can have nothing but evil in store for him. In his throes of misery, for it is grief rather than anger, he eloquently reveals his state of mind in these concluding lines.

¹ Allen, William D. D.; "A Book of Christian Sonnets",
(ed. 1860, p. 14)

² Petrarch, "Sonnets . . . and other Poems", translation,
(ed. 1901, p. 258)

"I wake, and feel me to the bitter wind
So bare, I envy the worse lot I see;
Self-terror and heart-grief on me so wait.
O Death, O Fate, O Fortune, stars unkind:
O day for ever dark and drear to me!
How have ye sunk me in this abject state!"¹

Petrarch's stern realization of the time which he has wasted in idle, fruitless pursuits is echoed by Christine Rossetti's sonnet "Vanity of Vanities"². But it is not only her own misdeeds which trouble this sonneteer. Her mood is one of settled gloom and sadness. All life seems vain and useless. A deep melancholy, slightly tinged with resentful passion, pervades the following lines:

"And evermore men shall go fearfully,
Bending beneath their weight of heaviness;
And ancient men shall lie down wearily,
And strong men shall rise up in weariness;
Yea, even the young shall answer sighingly
Saying one to another: How vain it is!"

With similar all-mastering grief, the aged Lear, afflicted by blindness, madness, and poverty is represented by Thomas Hood³ as bewailing in bitter sorrow his luckless fate. His numerous

¹ Petrarch, "Sonnets . . . and Other Poems", translation, (ed. 1901, p. 258).

² "Sonnets of the 19th Century", (ed. William Sharp, p. 181).

³ Hood, Thomas; "Poetical Works", Vol. I, (ed. 1858, p. 304).

afflictions have almost unbalanced his mind. Sorrow has deprived his anger of force but has scarcely ameliorated his realization of the harshness of his lot. He confesses, with halting speech, that his blindness and partial insanity are doubtless blessings in disguise so that he may not comprehend to the full the cruelty of his children. In pitiful tone he continues:

"I am childish grown -

And have not gold to purchase wit withal -

I that have once maintained most royal state -

A very bankrupt now that may not call

My child, my child - all beggared save in tears

Wherewith I daily weep an old man's fate,

Foolish - and blind - and overcome with years!"¹

Grim death whose coming Lear almost gladly awaits is berated harshly by Sir William Rowan Hamilton.² The poet's mood is at first that of terrified anger. He is filled with rage and consternation at the thought that ruthless Death seeks to deprive him of his dear friend. But, in concluding, the tone changes from the blank despair of Lear to a slight optimism. Hamilton taunts Death with its own insufficiency, its inability to sever the ties of true friendship.

"O Impotent! Overy Phantom! know,

Bounds are there to thy ravage even here;

Sanctuaries inaccessible to fear

Are in the heart of man while yet below:

Love, not of sense, can wake such communings

As are among the Soul's eternal things".

¹ Hood, Thomas; "Poetical Works, Vol. I, p. 304.

² Hamilton, Sir William Rowan; "Sonnets of 19th Century" (ed. William Sharp, p. 96)

The disgust for life which has been expressed in varying degrees of intensity in these sonnets mentioned is set forth in the sonnets of F. W. H. Myers and Frances Anne Butler, by a wave of extreme emotionalism and passion which tends to distinguish these sonnets from the others of like subject matter. Mr. Myers' mood¹ is one of extreme nervous restlessness; the long quiet night fills him with passionate yearning for the break of day. The few intervening hours slowly drag by like ages. But the most crushing blow is dealt when the longed-for light appears.

"I start and gaze into the world again,
And gazing find it as of old accurst
And grey and blinded with the stormy burst
And blank appalling solitude of rain."

A fixed opinion of the hatefulness of life permeates Frances Anne Butler's sonnet beginning "Oh weary, weary world!"² Her feeling of antipathy to life seems to have penetrated every motion and thought. Whenever her mind rests for a moment on human affairs, a new wave of revulsion causes her to shudder and loathe existence in such a world where -

"Loud discord, strife, and envy, fill the earth
With fearful riot, whilst unhallowed mirth
Shrieks frantic laughter forth, leading along,
Whirling in dizzy trance, the eager throng,
Who bear aloft the overflowing cup."

In the following sonnet³ the thought has advanced to a further

¹ Myers, Frederic W. H.; "Renewal of Youth and Other Poems", (ed. 1882, p. 83).

² Butler, Frances Anne; "Poems", (ed. 1844, p. 46)

³ Ibid, p. 54.

stage. The poet is in a spirit of mad revolt against the world. No longer can she merely recount in anguish the woes of this world. Her spirit rebels and can brook no further contact with this loathsome existence. Disgust and indignation are transformed into delirious emotionalism which vents itself in a frantic desire to quit this life at once. There is genuine feeling here, although she uses rhetorical utterances freely. She writes, for instance:-

"Away! away! oh, for some mighty blast,
To sweep this loathsome life into the past!"¹

The account furnished in these sonnets of the intimate personal reaction of various poets to the conditions of their earthly existence has bared the innermost feelings of the sonneteers. Primal passion is often revealed in these brief expositions of the poet's feelings. Yet the tone, wherever powerful, has been one of disgust and renunciation rather than one of flaming anger. The poets have felt an instinctive, unconquerable repugnance to the ugliness of life.² In the breasts of those who have given absolutely free rein to their emotions we have found a plain-spoken desire to shake off all contact with this life. Yet the prevailing tone has been one of utter weariness rather than of vital hatred.

¹ Butler, Frances Anne; "Poems", (ed. 1844, p. 54)

² In Thomas Pringle's sonnet "A Common Character" in "His Life, Times and Poems", (ed. 1912, p. 169), the poet denounces the weather-vane, fawning type of fellow who is
"Proud to the humble, to the haughty meek;
In flattery servile, insolent in rule:"

This note of real anger is found in its most powerful form in those sonnets which decry the political conditions, the governmental evils of the times. These sonnets are, it is true, rather intimately related to the purely political sonnets which will be considered later. Yet the tone prevalent in all of them is so closely akin to those which we have just considered, that it has seemed best to include them at this point. There is a sonnet, incomplete in form, said to have been written in 1665 by John Milton.¹ It must be admitted that this piece reflects much of the true Miltonic style and forcefulness. The Puritan poet beholds with anger and horror the laxity of morals everywhere apparent during the reign of the "Merry Monarch". As the sonneteer looks and reflects upon the widespread corruption of the age he calls down the vengeance of Heaven upon the wicked. Sternly he reminds the people how the Creator in the past had broken

" the pride of lustful kings,

Who Heaven's lore reject for brutish sense."

And a few years previously a staunch Loyalist had been moved to the same depths of anger and horror by the execution of the forebear of that "Merry Monarch". William Drummond² is filled with righteous anger at the execution of the sovereign by a so-called

¹ In "The Gentleman's Magazine"; Vol. LI, 1781, p. 135) is printed a fragmentary sonnet with this inscription "Said to have been written by Milton, on Occasion of the Plague, and to have been found on a glass window at Chalfont St. Giles in Buckinghamshire, 1665."

² Drummond, William; "Poetical Works", (ed. 1813, p. 174) Another sonnet on the same page is in the same tone, but William C. Ward, in his edition of Drummond's Poems in "The Muses' Library Series", declares (p. 305) that the latter sonnet is a direct translation from Sanazzaro and reflects that poet's mood, not Drummond's.

High Court of Justice. His detestation for those who have committed this deed knows no bounds. He angrily declares:-

"All good hath left this age, all trackes of shame,
Mercie is banished and pittye dead,
Justice from whence it came to heaven is fled,
Relligion maim'd is thought an idle name."¹

His abhorrence of Cromwell and that soldier's pretended Commonwealth leads him to bitter denunciation of the times.

"Now is it evill all evill not to embrace.
There is no life save under servile Bandes,
To make Desert a Vassall to their crimes
Ambition with Avarice joyne Hands;
O ever-shameful, O most shamelesse Tymes!"¹

The idle luxury of the English people while France is left sad and desolate by the Revolution leads Wordsworth in 1802 to pen two sonnets denouncing and deploring the decadence of the times. The poet's mood as expressed in "The Times that are"² reveals grief, vying with indignation. He is roused to wrathful utterance by what he deems the cold indifference of the English to the sufferings of others,³ and the increase of material grossness, pomp, and display. He exclaims with sorrow:

¹ Drummond, William; "Poetical Works", (ed. 1913, p. 174).

² Wordsworth, William; "Poetical Works," Vol. II, (ed. 1882, p. 300).

³ Wordsworth writes, "This was written immediately after my return from France to London, when I could not but be struck, as here described, with the vanity and parade of our own country, especially in great towns and cities, as contrasted with the quiet and I may say the desolation, that the Revolution had produced in France" - Vol. II (ed. 1882, p. 300)

"O Friend! I know not which way I must look
For comfort, being as I am, opprest,
To think that now our life is only drest
For show;"¹

The popular unconcern for true worth in life angers him.

"The wealthiest man among us is the best;
No grandeur now in nature or in book
Delights us, Rapine, avarice, expense,
This is idolatry: and these we adore:
Plain living and high thinking are no more."¹

He feels that this crisis calls for the services of such a high-minded man as Milton. This second sonnet² is written in the same vein as the preceding one. Wordsworth denounces the same vulgarity, the same vices, and calls on a former champion of right living to restore "manners, virtue, freedom, power."³

These sonnets which we have considered voice all shades of emotion from slight scorn to bitter opposition and overwhelming grief. This type of sonnets give abundant evidence of deep feelings. Yet few of them, as we have found, reveal actual indignation. Scorn yields to firmer opposition and that, in turn, is supplanted by unavailing grief and despair. It is only in

¹ Ibid

² Ibid. pp. 300-301.

³ Wordsworth, William; "Poetical Works", Vol. II,
(ed. 1882, pp. 300-301).

these semi-political sonnets, with which we have just been dealing, that we find much evidence of real anger. In the others the poet scorns folly, deplures the harshness of life and external nature, or bursts into passionate lamentation. These sonnets expressing opposition to abstract qualities and conditions rather than definite personal grievances rarely betray the emotion of anger in a dominant tone. Poets writing of such topics feel man's inability substantially to alter conditions. A spirit of fatalism pervades these productions. Opposition finds expression in complaint or blank despair, not in that spirited indignation which bursts forth, carrying all obstacles before it. Therefore, we will find slight evidence of the indignation motive in sonnets expressing disgust for the conditions surrounding human existence.

CHAPTER IV.

Religious Sonnets.

Religion has always been a subject of absorbing interest to people of all ranks and classes. It has been the theme of countless productions in both prose and verse. And so it is not unusual that there should be many sonnets written on religious subjects. Yet that these sonnets should be written on religious topics in a mood of indignation is very unusual. Religion is a force in human life which men customarily treat with respect and reverence. But investigation reveals the reason for the existence of the angry tone. The sonneteers are not satirizing and denouncing Divine worship. But they are exposing to the utmost of their ability those corruptions and shams which seek to conceal themselves under the cloak of true religion. Such imposture rouses the poets to indignant protest.

A vast majority of the English religious sonnets expressing indignation are directed against the Roman church. But English sonneteers were not the first to denounce Papal luxury and vice. Francesco Petrarch, himself a devout Catholic, wrote three sonnets flaying the iniquities of the Papal Court. The poet's whole soul is filled with abhorrence and anger at the sight of the existing corruption. In these sonnets we find no display of petty prejudice and childish bickering. A sincere, deeply religious sonneteer anathematizes the degrading conditions

existing in that church of which he is a faithful adherent.¹

In Sonnet CV, the enraged poet, addressing the Roman Court, prays that "fire from heaven rain down upon thy head,

Thou most accurst; who simple fare casts by,

Made rich and great by others' poverty;

How dost thou glory in thy vile misdeed;"²

Petrarch, a sincere and faithful Catholic, was horrified and outraged at the sight of the pomp and immorality which he beheld in the Court of the Pope. We must remember that he wrote these sonnets about the year 1342 during the time of the Babylonian Captivity. He had been commissioned by the Roman people to petition the new Pope, Clement VI, to return to Rome from Avignon. The Pope received the poet with profuse compliments but gave no assurance that he would return to his former seat. Hence this outbreak of the poet's wrath. In his angry mood, it seems to him that the present conduct of the Papal Court is responsible for all the ills of the world and he sternly rebukes it for the degrading example of gluttony, sensuality, and sloth which

¹ In his sketch of Petrarch's life Thomas Campbell writes: "Petrarch gave vent to his indignation at the papal court in a writing entitled, "A Book of Letters without a Title", and in several severe sonnets - - - From their contents, we might set down Petrarch as the earliest preacher of the Reformation, if there were not, in the writings of Dante, some passages of the same stamp - - It must be remembered, at the same time, that he wrote against the church government of Avignon, and not that of Rome. He compares Avignon with the Assyrian Babylon, etc." - Petrarch, "Sonnets and Other Poems", translation, (ed. 1901, p. 135)

² Ibid.

it has placed before the world. Yet even in the moment of his most violent disgust and anger, he looks forward to the coming of some great redeemer who shall cleanse and purify the Church and lead it back into the paths of simplicity.¹ In Sonnet CVII² the old anger is welling up again into the poet's soul. Again he censures the Papal Court as the

"Fountain of sorrows, centre of mad ire,

Rank error's school and fane of heresy."

His wrath increases and he sees little hope of the Church's survival if it persists in its iniquity. He even declares that

" great marvel it will be

If Christ reject thee no in endless fire."³

Yet his sorrow in feeling that the church deserves his denunciations leads him to attempt a palliation of the church's sinfulness. In its highest pitch, his anger is mingled with bitter grief.

In turning to the productions of those Protestant sonneteers who satirize the Roman Church we must at once take cognizance of a changed attitude. Petrarch's honest soul could not silently endure the wholesale vice and corruption which he saw about him. His righteous wrath would not permit him to be quiet. But in his most furious reproaches there was visible no weakening of his faith. He sought merely to bring, what was to him the only Faith, back into its former purity. But to these later sonneteers the Roman Church represented an antiquated,

¹ Petrarch, "Sonnets . . . and other Poems", translation, (ed. 1901, p. 136).

² Ibid. p. 137.

³ Ibid. p. 137.

corrupt faith in which they reposed neither credence nor trust. They did not seek to reform it but rather to destroy it. Therefore, the mood displayed by these poets is one of bitter scorn and hatred not to be mitigated. The Reverend William Allen writes of "The Overthrow of Popery"¹ with angry triumph at this downfall which he considers divinely destined, and with sneering contempt for those who bewail its loss.² In gloating tone he tells how Popery was predestined to suffer severe humiliation. His intense hatred for this faith leads him to feel that it lost sway because of its corruption and wickedness. Strong in this belief he declares that Rome was condemned by an angel and sternly concludes,

"And down the city fell in ruin wide,

And naught was seen of walls, that tower'd so late."

As he reflects upon the crafty magistrates who had looked to the Church for protection from justice, the poet's wrath is intensified by bitter contempt, and he relates in mocking tones:-

¹ Allen, William D. D.; "A Book of Christian Sonnets", (ed. 1860, p. 16)

² Less vehement, yet more forceful as satire is Dryden's description of the Presbyterians in "The Hind and the Panther" Part I, p. 221. He writes -

More haughty than the rest, the wolfish race,
Appear with belly gaunt and famish'd face.
Never was so deform'd a beast of grace.
His ragged tail betwixt his legs he wears,
Close clopp'd for shame; but his rough crest he rears,
And pricks up his predestinating ears."

"Alas, that city great! Cry might kings,
Whose sceptres had sustain'd her bigot sway,
Which she by sorc'ries propp'd their tyrant throne."¹

Although the poet's scorn of these civil magistrates who bewail the downfall of Papal power is very strong, it is merely mild in comparison with his utter detestation and abhorrence of the priests and higher ecclesiastical dignitaries who mourn the passing of their Church's power. His hatred for the priests is so bitter that he finds none but sordid, selfish reasons for the lamentation of these clergymen. His contempt knows no bounds as he considers the grief of the Catholic Church officials. Angrily he declares that they lament the passing:

"Of holy water, oil and relics cheap,
As blood, tears, rags and bones in grave-yard laid,
Of crosses, roods, and forms for Mary made,
Of beads and bulls, and various wares a heap;
Of idols, masses, pray'rs and souls of men."²

And these they lament, the infuriated poet declares, not because they themselves had faith in their virtue and efficiency, but only that by sale of them,

" they liv'd in indolence,

And laugh'd while their poor cred'lous dupes did groan"²

This sonnet furnishes an excellent example of the unsympathetic raillery at the Roman Church which is so far removed from the

¹ Allen, William D. D.; "A Book of Christian Sonnets",
(ed. 1860, p. 16)

² Ibid. p. 17.

the shocked reproof of the mother church by her faithful devotee, Petrarch. There is yet one other attitude revealed in sonnets criticizing the Catholic Faith. This we may justly term the retrospective attitude which is present in Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Sonnets. The poet's mood cannot truly be called impersonal, he is manifestly moved by his Protestant views. Yet the events of which he writes are in the far distant past. Although he has some appreciation of their significance, they do not stir in him the intensity of personal animus which we have found in Allen's sonnets. At its most violent state, the temper of his feeling is very mildly indignant. We will consider only those few specimens which give some little evidence, at least, of the motive of indignation. In Sonnet XXXVII¹ Wordsworth writes of the "Papal Abuses" prevalent in the 12th century. He speaks rather calmly of Henry II's punishment and penance for the murder of Thomas a Becket. But King John's surrender of his possessions to the Pope's representative and his acceptance of them again, as a gift from that Pontiff, rouses a spark of genuine wrath in the breast of the liberty-loving Wordsworth. He feels this humiliation of an English monarch rather keenly. "The spears that line

Baronial halls, the opprobrious insult feel;
And angry Ocean roars a vain appeal."¹

This rising note of scornful anger is revealed in "Papal Dominion". His remembrance of the power of the Pope over civil affairs in

¹ Wordsworth, William; "Poetical Works"; Vol. VII,
(ed. 1882, p. 33).

medieval times astound and disgusts the poet. His mood is one of wonder and contempt at the subserviency shown by the civil authorities to the head of the Church. In amazement he exclaims -

"Unless to Peter's Chair the viewless wind
Must come and ask permission when to blow,
What further empire would it have?"¹

This contempt is intensified when the poet considers the prevalence of corruption and immorality among the higher clergy. Yet this sonnet entitled "Corruptions of the Higher Clergy"² reflects more the anger of the people than of the poet. Here, as in so many others of the Ecclesiastical Sonnets, he assumes the role of historian and presents the reactions of others, rather than of himself to certain stimuli. The populace is gaining insight into the evil lives lead by the clergy and denounces the latter vigorously and freely. But when Wordsworth later writes of the revelry and immorality found even in convents he finds it impossible to view this ugly bit of Middle Age history with calmness. The poet, casting aside the pose of an impartial chronicler, is filled with indignation at the thought of the gross indecency which he is recording. In no uncertain terms he denounces the convent life where

"Unhallowed threads of revelry are spun;
There Venus sits disguised like a Nun,
While Bacchus, cloethed in semblance of a Friar,
Pours out his choicest beverage -"³

¹ Ibid. p. 34

² Ibid. p. 48

³ Ibid. p. 49

The fickleness of the masses which enabled Queen Mary to re-establish Popery is regarded with even deeper wrath by the poet. Sonnet XX reveals Wordsworth in a mood of genuine indignation. His hatred and contempt for Catholicism is clearly shown in his account of its reinstitution.

"Again do they invoke

The Creature, to the Creature glory give;

Again with frankincense the altars smoke

Like to those Heathen served; and mass is sung."¹

Wordsworth's anger is plainly revealed in the preceding lines but should it require further emphasis, his contempt for prayers in a tongue (Latin) which is unintelligible to the vast majority of worshippers affords ample evidence of his mood. These concluding lines of his summary of the obnoxious features of the Catholic worship tingle with scorn and hatred.

"And prayer, man's rational prerogative,

Runs through blind channels of an unknown tongue."²

It is only natural that a poet of one faith should be inclined to satirize another faith so unlike his own. Satires on all institutions of human agency are frequent and very natural. Sonnets, indignant in tone, which bitterly criticize the ways and actions of the Creator are rare indeed. Robert Buchanan, however, has written three sonnets denouncing God for his lack of

¹ Ibid. p. 58.

² Ibid, p. 58.

pity. These sonnets are in the group of sonnets written on the shores of Loch Coruisk. The poet, alone in the open, falls into a deep revery concerning the mysteries of the Creator. He marvels that the Lord does not seem to be present in the times of a man's greatest need. His mood is, at this point, one merely of questioning wonder. But as he contemplates these apparent riddles concerning God and life, his wonder gives way to anger and he reproaches the Creator for permitting man to suffer so much misery. His anger mounts as he contemplates the miseries of the world, and he feels certain that God is pitiless. He finally concludes that such a heartless worker of ill deserves punishment. In this mood, the poet writes Sonnet XII "God Is Pitiless".¹ As he reflects upon the many crises in human life in which it seems that Divine help is wholly lacking, his wrath at the apparent mercilessness of the Creator causes him to cry out:-

"When dost Thou come with glorious hands to bless
The good man that dies cold for lack of Thee?
When brings't Thou garlands for our happiness?
Whom dost Thou send but Death to set us free?"

In his angry mood, the poet feels that all manner of ill occurs in the world because of the Creator's want of supervision there.

"Blood runs like wine-foul spirits sit and rule -
The weak are crushed in every street and lane-
He who is generous becomes the fool
Of all the world, and give his life in vain."²

¹ Buchanan, Roberts: "Complete Poetical Works", Vol. I, (ed. 1901, p. 251).

² Ibid, p. 251.

The poet's indignant mood increases as he gazes upon these daily injustices. He intimates that the Lord is also guilty not only of negligency but of wilful cruelty. His wrath has risen to such heights that he feels that these dreadful conditions could exist only with the Creator's willing connivance. As proof he cites the following appalling conditions:

"The Prophet cries, gone made for lack of Thee!"

While good men dying deem Thy grace a dream."¹

With this feeling that the Lord has consented to such a state of affairs the poet sternly reminds him of the existing state of religion, of the increase of idolatry. He writes:

"Fair stretch Thy temples over all the lands,

In each of these some barbarous Image stands,

And men grow atheists in the shrine of each."¹

There can be but one logical conclusion to such a state of mind. The poet has brooded over the wrongs of the world; has decided that the Creator is a wilful criminal. Since he has criticized the Lord with the same frankness with which he would denounce a human offender he now arrives at the final step - the culprit should be judged and sentenced. As Buchanan reflects upon the myriad wrongs of mankind, all of which he attributes to the Creator, his wrath at the thought of such a nefarious, powerful doer of evil drives him to the mad desire that the offender should be punished. His realization of the impossibility of such a proceeding serves only as an added stimulus to his emotionalism already overwrought. His exclamations come unchecked from an

¹ Ibid. p. 251.

over-taxed mind. He cries out impetuously:

"Can I be calm, beholding everywhere
Disease and Anguish busy, early and late?
Can I be silent, nor compassionate
The evils that both Soul and Body bear."¹

And do he is driven to the impious, though futile, exclamation

"Lord! that mad'st Man, and send'st him foes so fleet,
Who shall judge Thee upon Thy judgment - day?"²

Such critical censure of the Deity as we have found in these sonnets of Buchanan is indeed rare. The poet's anger is more likely to fall upon those who hearken not unto the Creator rather than upon that Being himself. This condemnation of the people for their callousness towards the natural revelations of Divine power forms the theme of William Allen's sonnet entitled "Written in a Thunderstorm".³ The poet's angry mood is inspired by what he considers the encroachment of science upon the realm rightfully belonging to religion. He reflects on the piety of the pagans who recognized divinity in external Nature; heard Jove's voice in the thunder; and saw his javelin in the flash of lightning. He is shocked and angered at the indifferent attitude of Christians who consider all the natural phenomena merely as matters for scientific investigation. The poet,

¹ Ibid. p. 251.

² Ibid p. 251.

³ Allen, William D. D.; "A Book of Christian Sonnets",
(ed. 1860, p. 30).

an ardent supporter of orthodoxy, feels certain that those who look upon nature as a phenomenon admitting of explanation by science, alone, are doomed. Therefore, he utters this angry warning - "But now since Franklin drew a spark from cloud,

And prov'd it merely electricity, -

Though, God! thou speak in thunders e'er so loud,

Out empty science makes us deaf to Thee,

And though thy lightnings glare, yet we are proud,

And blind to thy most glorious Majesty!"¹

In similar vein Wordsworth scores the modern world for its excessive interest in the material, sordid things, thereby failing to appreciate the wonders and beauties of Nature. As he contemplates the busy crowds ever engaged in piling up riches and enjoying worldly pleasures, a great revulsion of feeling sweeps over him and he declares:

"Great God! I'd rather be

A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn,

So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,

Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;

Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn."²

¹ Ibid. p. 30.

² "Treasury of English Sonnets", (ed. David M. Main, 1880, p. 97) Leigh Hunt also wrote "On the Degrading Nations of Deity". The poet is angered by the conservative opposition to Shelley's religious tenets. He derisively terms his opponents as superstitious and ignorant. "They seat a phantom, swelled into grim size
Out of their own passions and bigotries,
And then for fear, proclaim it meek and sage!
And this they call a light and a revealing!"
Hunt, Leigh; "Poetical Works", (ed. 1860, p. 238).

The emotional fervency revealed in many of these religious sonnets expressing disapprobation proves their relative suitability for the expression of indignation. In this class of sonnets we find genuine scorn and anger because we are dealing with a subject of vital interest to the average man. Since religion has such a grip upon men, its discussion is certain to bring out the poet's deepest feelings. Neither the plea of conservatism nor policy serves as a check upon the pen of the sonneteer when he is defending his religious tenets or attacking objectionable beliefs. Therefore, we find real warmth of passion revealed in these sonnets. This combination of frankness and unrestrained emotion makes the religious sonnet capable of the expression of the indignation motive.

CHAPTER V.

Political Sonnets.

The same intensity of feeling which we have discovered in the religious sonnets is prevalent in those sonnets which denounce political conditions. Although throughout the centuries man has found spiritual oppression to be very burdensome, he has rebelled with equal vigor against the abuses inflicted by his temporal lords. In many instances religion and civil government are closely united. Therefore a denunciation of the one often implies a similar attitude towards the other. Thus Petrarch's sonnets denouncing the Papal Court were really intended by the poet as protests against a corrupt governing body rather than as attacks upon the Catholic faith. Similarly, some of Milton's and Wordsworth's sonnets which are included in this chapter, because of their attacks on political situations, are equally effective as assaults upon the religious intolerances of those political leaders. Yet the important point in our treatment of these political sonnets is not that they often contain, in addition, the religious element. Rather it is that the desire for political freedom is as strong in the human breast as the wish for freedom of worship. We find among these sonnets a wide range of emotions. The mood varies from mild disapproval of some general subject to a definite denunciation of a particular person. In these latter sonnets the vituperative element is

often present.

This note, however, is most intense in those sonnets in which the poet denounces a definite political opponent of his own times. Various cases of this sort are cited in the latter portion of the chapter. We have first to consider those which, although they reveal the emotions of the poet clearly, are still impersonal in as much as they deal with broad, general questions rather than particular antagonists. Lord Byron's sonnet on "Chillon"¹ is strongly imbued with a moral tone. The poet's imagination is inflamed, and his liberty-loving sympathies awakened by a contemplation of the sacred memories called to his mind by the mention of Chillon. Although there is a direct reference to one martyr,² the thought of the place arouses in the poet's heart an ardent love and admiration for all the brave souls who have submitted to imprisonment in order that their minds might be free. Of course, there is a corresponding feeling of scorn and opposition to those civil powers which causes the imprisonment of these men. Yet the dominant tone is one of almost reverential admiration for the martyred men. In glowing terms Byron apostrophizes the

"Eternal Spirit of the chainless mind!

Brightest in dungeons, Liberty, thou art; -

For there by habitation is the heart, -

The heart which love of thee alone can bind;"³

¹ Byron; "Complete Poetical Works", (ed. 1905, p. 402).

² Byron mentions Bonivard in this sonnet, the hero of Byron's poem, "The Prisoner of Chillon". At the time of his imprisonment Bonivard was not a Protestant, therefore this punishment was not inflicted for religious reasons.

³ Byron; "Complete Poetical Works", (ed. 1905, p. 402).

In a more bitter spirit, Leigh Hunt celebrates the deliverance of Poerio and his companions from an Italian prison.¹ The poet rejoices in the freedom of the patriots, but his dominant tone is one of indignation at their oppressors. He writes -

"O Noble souls, freed from the foulest spite
That ever tyrannous and heartless fool
Wreak'd on the worth that shamed his worthless rule,
Linking your very bodies, day and night,
With lower souls, in hopes your patient might
Would droop despairing, as by Stygian pool;"²

Moved by this specific instance of contrasted patriotism and tyranny, Hunt, like Byron, philosophizes on glory and lauds the courageous hearts which would not bow to despotism. The ill treatment of worthy men also forms the substance of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "Tiber, Nile and Thames".³ The poet, thrilled with anger, fears that the city by the Thames has a "Cleopatra's Needle" which, as in Rome and Alexandria, pierces the tongues of those who dare speak out. The mood displayed in the sonnet becomes one of frenzied, impotent indignation as he feelingly describes the flagrant murder and degradation of the silver-

1 Hunt, Leigh; "Poetical Works", (ed. 1860, p. 241).
Poerio, Italian patriot, was sentenced by King Ferdinand (1849) to be chained in irons in the bagno of Nisida for nineteen years. In 1858 numerous English sympathizers, including Gladstone, secured his release and he was brought to England. At this time Hunt wrote the sonnet concerning him.

2 Ibid. p. 241.

3 Rossetti, Dante Gabriel; "Complete Poetical Works", (ed. 1907, p. 266).

tongued Cicero.¹ In passionate anger and reproach he cries out:

"And thou, Cleopatra's Needle, that hadst thrid
Great skirts of Time ere she and Anthony hid
Dead hope! - hast thou too reached, surviving death,
A city of sweet speech scorned, - on whose chill stone
Keats withered, Coleridge pined and Chatterton
Breadless, with poison froze the God-fired breath?"

His indignation at what appeared to be barbarity equivalent to that of the ancients thus bursts forth in vigorous denunciation of those who would permit the continued existence of such heartlessness in a different form. A like feeling of abhorrence for modern heartlessness pervades Dina Craik's "Guns of Peace".²

With mingled sorrow for the slain and anger at the powers which cause such slaughter, she meditates on the spirit of the soldier dead. Do they merely feel disdain for such mundane conditions as caused their departure from earthly flesh? At any rate, her detestation of such wholesale butchery cannot be easily quieted. With a sudden boldness, begot of long and patient endurance she thus exhorts the ghosts of the departed:

"Yet lift one cry with us to Heavenly ears -

'Strike with Thy bolt the next red flag unfurl'd,

And make all wars to cease throughout the world'".³

Thomas Hardy, also, is moved to utterance when he considers the devastations wrought by war. The poet frequently hears peasants speaking in the German tongue. With this realization of the

¹ Ibid. p. 266.

² "Sonnets of 19th Century", (ed. William Sharp, p. 50).

³ Ibid. p. 50.

close kinship between the chief combatants of the World War, Hardy's anger is roused at those officials who brought about this conflict between kinsmen. But there is pity for the sufferers as well as a curse for the instigators thereof. The poet's mood is well shown in these lines in which he represents the heart as crying out:

"'Whosoever they be
At root and bottom of this, who flung this flame
Between kin folk kin tongued even as are we,
Sinister, ugly, lurid, be their fame:
May their familiars grow to shun their name,
And their breed perish everlastingly'".¹

A heightened condemnation of the great nations as brutal and cruel is given in Wilfrid S. Blunt's denunciation of the European powers. The poet, an ardent advocate of liberty and a promoter of Irish Home Rule,² feels a wave of passionate revulsion sweep through his soul as he beholds the nations

"Serving an idol for their God and King.
Blindly they rage together, worshipping
Their lusts of cunning, and their lusts of gold;"³

But the real depths of his grief and anger are sounded when he

1 "War Verse" (ed. Frank Foxcroft 1918, p. 83).

2 Wilfrid S. Blunt lectured in Ireland in 1887 in favor of Home Rule. He was arrested in connection with a slight uprising there and was imprisoned at Kilmainham for two months. About this time he wrote the sonnet mentioned.

3 Blunt, Wilfrid S.; "A New Pilgrimage", (ed. 1889, p. 19).

comes to the realization that there is no help for this state of affairs, that

" there is found no hand to ward or keep
The weak from wrong, and Pity is asleep."¹

This feeling that the present status of the civilized world is a thoroughly unsatisfactory one forms the theme for Dante Gabriel Rossetti's sonnet "On Refusal of Aid Between Nations".² His naturally romantic spirit is dismayed and shocked by the narrow foreign policy of the various governments. As he reflects upon the lack of true humanity displayed by mankind, his bitterness of spirit increases and he feels that God is sure to punish the world -

" . . because Man is parcelled out in men
Today; because, for any wrongful blow,
No man not stricken asks, 'I would be told
Why thou dost thus; but his heart whispers then
'He is he, I am I'. By this we know
That the earth falls asunder, being old."²

Rossetti's discontent and disgust with national administration is repeated in Watson's "Reported Concessions."³ The latter feels great contempt for the namby-pamby diplomacy of the British government. The poet's scorn of the diplomatic cowardice, as he

¹ Ibid. p. 19.

² Rossetti, Dante Gabriel; "Complete Poems", (ed. 1907, p. 289).

³ "Sonnets of the 19th Century" (ed. William Sharp, p. 328).

views it, of the statesmen drives him to the angry utterances of this sonnet.¹ With apt phrasing he reveals his detestation of those craven diplomats who prefer a dishonorable peace to a just war. In this connection he writes:

"Verily I do think

War is as hateful almost, and well-nigh
As ghastly, as the terrible Peace whereby
We halt for ever on the crater's brink
And feed the wind with phrases, while we know
There gapes at hand the infernal percipice
O'er which a gossamer bridge of words we throw,
Yet cannot choose but hear from the abyss
The sulphurous gloom's unfathomable hiss
And simmering lava's subterranean flow."²

We could hardly ask for a clearer manifestation of burning shame kindled into furious scorn than the preceding lines contain. This criticism of government delinquency in general affairs is also found in W. M. Rossetti's "Democracy Downtrodden".³ The sonneteer's mood is one of sorrow for the continued oppression found throughout the world. But his grief and sorrow are colored by anger. He

¹ In similar spirit George Boker writes a sonnet "To America" calling for sturdy patriotism and scorning a cringing attitude towards Europe. His sonnet "To Andrew Jackson" is in the same tone and deals with the same subject.

Boker, George H.; "Plays and Poems", Vol. II,
(ed. 1856, pp. 375 and 384).

² "Sonnets of the 19th Century" (ed. William Sharp, p. 328).

³ "Sonnets of the 19th Century" (ed. William Sharp, p. 195)

becomes convinced that some day God will wreak his vengeance upon the guilty ones. The wail of the downtrodden

" . . . doth cry aloud and will

Between the earth's end and earth's end, until

The day of the great reckoning - bone for bone,

And blood for righteous blood, and groan for groan:

Then shall it cease on the air, with a sudden thrill;

Not slowly growing fainter if the rod

Strikes here or there amid the evil throng

Or one oppressor's hand is stayed and numbs;

Not till the vengeance that is coming comes."¹

The indignation evinced by the poets against the general conduct of government as revealed in the preceding sonnets is directed against definite abuses of power in those sonnets which we are now to consider. In this category we find perhaps the most powerful of Milton's sonnets, XIII.² The form of this most powerful of Milton's sonnets is very different from that of the average sonnet. It is known as the tailed sonnet, a form much used by the Italians for purposes of satire. In righteous wrath, the poet delivers a biting invective against the Presbyterian majority of the Long Parliament. He is enraged by the discovery that the Puritans are as arrogant and intolerant in religious government as the Established Church ever dared to be. He flays these gross hypocrites without mercy. Every word rings with stinging rebuke.

¹ "Sonnets of 19th Century", (ed. William Sharp, p. 195)

² Milton, John; "Sonnets", (ed. 1892, p. 159)

He assures them that he knows they seek church preference rather than freedom of worship, that they would brand learned scholars as heretics.

"But we do hope to find out all your tricks
Your plots and packing, worse than those of Trent;
That so the parliament
May, with their wholesome and preventive shears,
Clip your phylacteries, though balk your ears,
And succour our just fears,
When they shall read this clearly in your charge,
New Presbyterian is but old Priest writ large."¹

An echo of this might poet's fight for liberty is heard over two hundred years later in Walter Crane's sonnet "On the Suppression of Free Speech at Chicago".² The latter, to be sure, lacks the lofty spirituality, the deep seriousness of Milton. Yet Crane, too, feels dismay and anger at the realization that tyranny and injustice flourish in a land which incessantly boasts of freedom and justice for all. His wonderment yields to a sort of sarcastic anger in the following lines:

"Doth Freedom dwell where ruthless Kings of gain,
Like stealthy vampires, still on Labour feed,
Still free - to toil or starve on plenty's plain?"²

In a later sonnet we find this same tone of satiric inquiry as he speaks of the vaunts of American democracy.

¹ Ibid. p. 159.

² Crane, Walter; "Renaissance, A Book of Verse",
(ed. 1891, p. 156).

"What meaneth then the gibbet and the gag
Held up to Labour's sons who would not see
Fair Freedom but a mask - a hollow show?"¹

These protests against intolerance seem mild when we consider the sonnets which denounce and deplore some wholesale massacre such as Milton's "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont".² Milton is deeply moved by the news of the atrocities committed upon the Protestants by order of the Duke of Savoy. Mark Pattison in his "Life of Milton" p. 126 writes concerning the protest of the Commonwealth (1655) to the Duke of Savoy: "All the despatches in this business were written in Latin by Milton. The tone of them is more moderate than we should have expected, considering that Blake was in the Mediterranean, and master of the sea-coast. Thus restricted by diplomatic propriety in his official communications, Milton gave vent to his feelings in this sonnet". In true Miltonic fashion the poet's grief at the news of such injustice soon turns to anger and a desire for vengeance. He calls upon the Lord to exact retribution for these crimes. He feels that the martyrs will be avenged in some measure by the resultant hatred for Catholicism.

"Their martyred blood and ashes sow
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple tyrant; that from these may grow

¹ Ibid. p. 157

² Milton, John; "Sonnets", (ed. 1892, p. 197)

A hundredfold, who, having learnt thy way,
Early may fly the Babylonian woe."¹

The feeling is very intense in Tennyson's "On Poland" and in Algernon Swinburne's sonnet entitled "On the Russian Persecution of the Jews". Tennyson's love of fair play received a severe shock at the Russian invasion of Poland. His grief at the thought of such barbarity causes him to despair of any help from mankind. Therefore, he beseeches aid from the Deity for these oppressed people. There is just a shade of scepticism in the tone of the sonnet; Tennyson appears to doubt somewhat the perfect justice of the Lord. Thus, we find indignation and doubt as well as grief in this exclamation:

"How long, O God, shall men be ridden down
And trampled under by the last and least
of men?" and yet again

"'Lord, how long shall these things be?'"²

The tone of Swinburne's sonnet is even more emotional. The thought of the sufferings which the Jews have endured rouse in him an

¹ Milton, John; "Sonnets", (ed. 1892, p. 197).
Similar in tone is Wordsworth's Sonnet (ed. William Knight)
Vol. VII, p. 76 on the "Persecution of the Scottish Covenanters".
In 1665 the uprising of the Scotch covenanters was put down
with much cruelty and continued persecution. Of the Piedmont
massacre and Protestant intervention he writes:
"How little boots that precedent of good
Scorned or forgotten, Thou can's't testify,
For England's shame, O Sister Realm! from wood,
Mountain and moor, and crowded street, where lie
The headless martyrs of the Covenant - "

² Tennyson, Alfred; "Works", Vol. I (ed. 1907, p. 108.)

intense indignation and bitter grief. The tone is almost hysterical in its fervor. The shock of such unChristian deeds almost destroys the natural balance of his mind. The following lines are vibrant with the intensity of Swinburne's reaction to such cruelties. In addressing the Saviour, he writes:

"If thou see this, or hear these hounds of thine
Run ravening as the Gadarean swine,
Say, was not this thy Passion to foreknow
In death's worst hour the works of Christiam men?"¹

This same intensity of feeling combined with genuine anger is found in the various sonnets denouncing slavery. Thomas Pringle, for years a settler in Cape Colony, was brought face to face with the ugliest features of slavery.² In his sonnet by that name we see revealed the fullness of his hatred for any type of bondage. The mere mention of slavery rouses his wrath. His detestation of it is so completely a part of himself that he need use no rhetoric for effective expression. The simple outpouring of his normal feelings produces such a forceful sonnet as we have here. The poet's anger is whole hearted and unrestrained. It leads him to score slavery as disastrous to both captive and owner.

"Oh Slavery! thou art a bitter draught
And twice accursed is thy poisoned bowl;
Which taints with leprosy the White Man's soul,
Not less than his by whom its dregs are quaffed."³

¹ Swinburne, Algernon Charles; "Poems", Vol. V. (ed. 1904, p. 247)

²² Thomas Pringle was in South Africa from 1820-26. While there he wrote both of the sonnets quoted here.

³ Pringle, Thomas; "His Life, Times and Poems," (ed. 1912, p.163)

Yet the poet's angry mood seems futile. He is filled with rage at the existing wrongs but he seems to have no plans for the remedy of those evils. In his sonnet entitled "To Oppression"¹ the same vehement opposition is sounded but here we also find ~~no~~ resolution in the poet's mood. He no longer vainly protests. His tone is one of assurance and determination. This spirit is clearly reflected throughout the sonnet and especially in these lines: "I swear, while life-blood warms my throbbing veins,

Still to oppose and thwart with heart and hand
Thy brutalising sway - till Afric's chains
Are burst and Freedom rules the rescued land, -
Trampling Oppression and his iron rod
Such is the Vow I take - So help me God!"²

The six sonnets "Concerning the Slave Trade" written earlier by Robert Southey³ reveal deeper feeling than those which we have just considered. Southey sincerely detests the slave trade yet his reflection on the subject moves him to reveal as much feeling as anger in his sonnets. Righteous indignation, a fierce thirst for revenge, and a pity almost feminine are intermingled in these sonnets. The first two reveal the poet's bitterness

¹ Ibid. p. 169.

² Ibid. p. 169.

This latter sonnet was written in 1825. At this time Pringle intended returning to England as soon as possible, he set sail in April 1826. His vow to fight slavery was energetically fulfilled when he reached London.

³ Southey, Robert; "Poetical Works", (ed. 1866, p. 99)

against slave traders and owners. His anger rises as he considers their lack of mercy, their continued cruelty. The following two sonnets thrill with feeling, the poet's mood is that of unlimited pity and shame as he contemplates the hapless state of his black brothers. In this mood he pictures (Sonnet IV) the misery of the captive's wife.

"While happy Negroes join the midnight song,
And merriment resounds on Niger's shore,
She whom he loves, far from the cheerful throng
Stands sad, and gazes from her lowly door
With dim-grown eyes, silent and woe-begone,
And weeps for him who will return no more."¹

The two concluding sonnets reveal the poet's bitterest indignation and his desire for the punishment of the slave drivers. All weak sentiments are now banished from his mind. Overpowering anger and hatred dominate his mood. The following passage furnishes an excellent illustration of his temper in these sonnets. With a sort of grim joy he assures the cruel owners who have just killed a negro, "Beyond the grave

There is another world! - - bear ye in mind
Ere your decree proclaims to all mankind
The gain is worth the guilt, that there the Slave
Before the Eternal, "thunder-tongued shall plead
Against the deep damnation of your deed'"¹

Sonnets denouncing governmental policies and measures reveal, as we have seen, various shades of grief, pity and anger.

¹ Ibid. p. 99

A few show an intensity which classes them as indignant sonnets. Yet political sonnets decrying definite leaders contemporary with the poet frequently show more indignation, and this is the type which we will now consider. During the Crimean War Sydney Dobell writes of Czar Nicholas, leader of the hostile forces, with a curious mixture of awe and formal hatred. He is denouncing a national enemy of his own day who is a power in Europe at the time the poet writes the sonnet.¹ Yet Dobell feels a marked respect for the prowess of this mighty opponent, as is evidenced by the description of the Czar as

" that colossal foe,
The morning shadow of whose hideous head
Darkened the furthest West, and who did throw
His evening shade on ind."²

The poet's mood is also partially one of anger, but the wrath seems to be very formal in character. The poet is indignant because this monarch is fighting against England, but he feels no personal animosity towards the subject of his denunciation. Therefore, the personal animus which creates the most intense indignation is lacking in the author's tone. For example, he mildly writes:

" Lay him low!
Aye, low as for our priceless English dead
We hie and grown today in England!"³

With similar want of real feeling Wordsworth criticizes the "Merry Monarch", Charles, the Second. In this case the sonneteer is deprecating the follies and vices of a monarch long since dead. In harsh tones the poet berates

¹ The sonnet was written in 1855.

² Dobell, Sydney; "Poetical Works", Vol. I, (ed. 1875, p. 230)

³ Ibid. p. 230.

the king as one whom

"Virtue's Nurse, Adversity, in vain
Received, and fostered in her iron breast:
For all she taught of hardiest and of best,
Or would have taught, by discipline of pain
And long privation, now dissolves amain,
Or is remembered only to give zest
To Wantonness - Away, Circean revels!"¹

Yet these lines contain no warmth of feeling because the poet's mood is merely that of mild disapproval, not uncompromising opposition. Wordsworth writes scornfully of Napoleon in 1803 when that international figure was a power in Europe. Here, again, since the sonnet is general rather than specific in application the tone is of scorn and contempt rather than of indignation. Wordsworth loaths this intruder into world prominence and is thoroughly disgusted to find him

" of men the meanest too!
Raised up to sway the world, to do, undo,
With mighty Nations for his underlings." ²

The realization that this insignificant fellow, this object of his scorn, is so powerful causes the poet to declare derisively that: "The great events with which old story rings
Seem vain and hollow; I find nothing great:
Nothing is left which I can venerate." ²

1 Wordsworth, William; "Poetical Works", Vol. VII,
(ed. 1882, p. 73).

2 Wordsworth, William; "Poetical Works", Vol. II,
(ed. 1882, p. 381).

The poet's low estimate of the man causes his opposition towards him to be one of contempt and scorn rather than one of bitter hatred. This latter emotion is much more clearly depicted in George Boker's sonnet on "Louis Napoleon".¹ This poet had considered the "little corporal's" nephew, Louis Napoleon, as a man worthy of respect and consideration. His esteem changes to indignation when the younger Napoleon allows himself to be proclaimed as Emperor of the French.² Then the sonneteer's mood becomes one of bitter anger, real indignation, as the following lines show:

"Was it for thee to stoop unto a crown?
Pick up the Bourbon's leavings, yield thy height
Of simple majesty, and totter down
Full of discovered frailties - sorry sight!
One of a mob of kings? or, baser grown,
Was it for thee to steal it in the night?"³

There is a note of true indignation in Coleridge's vituperative sonnet upon Pitt. The romantic lover of radical republicanism is enraged at Pitt's conduct of the war against France.⁴ The youthful poet's mood can only be described as that of bitter indignation towards a great Prime Minister whom he conscientiously considers a traitor to freedom and his country. In this angry

¹ Boker, George H.; "Plays and Poems", Vol. II, (ed. 1856, p. 376).

² Louis Napoleon had posed as a friend of Republicanism for several years but when a favorable moment arrived, he was proclaimed formally as emperor in 1852. He had been very powerful previously.

³ Boker, George H.; "Plays and Poems", Vol. II, (ed. 1856, p. 376).

⁴ Pitt advocated and secured the passage of certain bills restricting the freedom of speech and press in 1793. These angered the twenty-two year old Coleridge, then an ardent admirer of France.

state of mind Coleridge addresses Pitt as one

"Who with proud terms of dear-lov'd Freedom came -
More blasting than the mildew from the South!
And kiss'd his country with Iscariot mouth
(Oh! foul apostate from his Father's fame!)
Then fix'd her on the Cross of deep distress,
And at safe distance marks the thirsty Lance
Pierce her big side!"¹

Coleridge reveals his detestation of Pitt clearly; yet his wrath against that official lacks much of the pointed effectiveness to be found in Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey's sonnet "Of Sardinapalus' dishonorable life, and miserable death."² The latter sonneteer feels nothing but the most bitter contempt and hatred for his monarch - the sonnet is, of course, a satire on Henry VIII. Surrey's hatred, though partially caused by political conditions, is mainly a fixed personal dislike of the king. The poet feels only contempt and disgust at the thought of Henry's traits. The concluding lines of the sonnet clearly reveal the depth of the poet's anger. He relates the disgraceful suicide of the Assyrian king, the nominal subject of the sonnet. The implication here is not one to be deemed playful.

"When he had lost his honor, and his right:
Proud, time of wealth, in storms appalled with drede,
Murthered himself, to shew some manful dede."³

¹ Coleridge, Samuel Taylor; "Complete Poetical Works", Vol. I, (ed. 1912, P. 83).

² Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey; "Tottel's Miscellany" (Arber reprint, p. 30).

³ Ibid. p. 30.

The late World War produced some English sonnets denouncing the leaders of the Central Powers which frequently show strains of real indignation. Stuart P. Sherman's sonnet entitled "On First Looking Into Bernhardi's 'Our Next War'"¹ indicated a tone more of surprise and displeasure than of indignation. The poet censures Bernhardi as a deluded prophet. He feels surprise and regret at the mistaken tenets of that German writer and his disappointment leads him to state their fallacy. Still the tone is one of grieved astonishment. Sorrow yields to a brief flash of anger which he considers the devastation which can be wrought by a ruthless monarch. He writes:

"Behind him stretch the sterile wastes of war,
Before, a widening wilderness of hate,
While all the world lifts up one wrathful cry
To give this Prussian Machiavel the lie."²

The stern tone of these last lines is found throughout Lawrence Binyon's sonnet of "The Harvest".³ The poet's anger is aroused by his contemplation of the numerous crimes of the "Proud War-Lords". His wrath is enduring in nature and lacks the feeling which we have found so frequently. Calmly he reflects upon the sins attributable to the German military leaders and thinks of their future punishment. The deliberate anger which determines the poet's mood is clearly brought out in the sestet:

¹ "The Nation", Vol. 99, No. 2577, p. 604.

² Ibid. p. 604.

³ Binyon, Lawrence; "The Winnowing-Fan: Poems of the Great War", (ed. 1914, p. 14).

"You reap a heavier harvest than you know.

Disnaturing a nation, you have thieved
Her name, her patient genius, while you thought
To fool the world and master it. You sought
Reality. It comes in hate and woe.

In the end you also shall not be deceived."¹

The poet loses his calmness in a further consideration of the enemy's duplicity. No longer does Binyon repress the bitterness of his wrath. As he reflects upon the treachery and cowardice of the German leaders, his feelings are roused to a pitch incompatible with calmness. The bitterest scorn and contempt fill the poet's breast. Thrilled with indignation he sneeringly exclaims:

"But when your lips usurp the loyal phrase
Of honour, querulously voluble
of 'chivalry' and 'kindness', and you praise
What you despise for weakness of the fool,
Then the gorge rises. Bleat to dupe the dead!
The wolf beneath the sheepskin drips too red."²

The climax of bitter scorn, contempt, and hatred we find in the mood of Walter Arensberg's forcible sonnet "Am Tag".³ The poet's animosity towards the German Kaiser has reached the highest pitch of fervor possible. Any increase of feeling would render his tone purely hysterical. The unrelieved venom of his detestation of the former Emperor is revealed in every line of the sestet. Bitterly he writes:

¹ Ibid. p. 14.

² Ibid. p. 25.

³ Arensberg, Walter Conrad: "Idols", (ed. 1916, p. 52).

"Them you enlighten, too - the right divine
Is yours! And from a heaven above the Rhine
Your visitation! And immaculate
Is the conception as the women wait,
Beneath the dove-like wings of aeroplanes,
The pleasure that you feel in their remains."¹

Such is the intensity of anger reached in the best of these indignant sonnets on political subjects. This high pitch is reached only in those sonnets which denounce definite oppressors. The greatest feeling is found in those sonnets in which the poet is a contemporary of these definite oppressors whom he denounces. For this reason, Coleridge's sonnet on "Pitt" is far more effective than that of Wordsworth on "Charles the Second". And so we have found a steady progression, an increase in indignation in passing through sonnets of such a moral tone as that of Byron's "Chillon", Blunt's and Watson's sonnets on national selfishness and mismanagement, Pringle's and Southey's fervid denunciations of the slave trade and, finally, the concluding sonnets flaying without mercy the German War Lords.

In these sonnets we have discovered all shades of wrath. It would therefore seem that these political sonnets express indignation effectively. It is true that many of the most forceful of these such as Boker's "Andrew Jackson", Milton's denunciation of the Long Parliament, and Arensberg's "Am Tag" show slight irregularities in form. Yet the strength of unified feeling which they contain far outbalances their slight technical defects. Binyon's "Harvest" and "To the Enemy Complaining" also deserve to be classed with those previously mentioned as true sonnets adequately portraying indignation.

CONCLUSION.

In the various classes of sonnets cited in the preceding chapters we have found several shades of milder feelings leading up to some few indications of true indignation. In the love sonnets, the lover's dissatisfaction with his abject condition yields to a more vigorous attitude, finally culminating in such an indignant renunciation of the faithless lady as we find in Shakespeare's Sonnet #152. Mingled envy and contempt of sonneteers for their fellows gradually change to that scornful anger so prevalent in Milton's sonnets denouncing those narrow-minded Puritans who opposed his views on the divorce question. On the other hand, the poet's hatred of life rarely reveals more than the hysterical emotionalism of Frances Anne Butler's and Frederic Myers's sonnets. Religious opposition rouses a more vigorous protest from the sonneteers. Allen's detestation of Catholicism leads to his vehement denunciation of that faith, and Robert Buchanan's sensitiveness at the sight of the endless sufferings of ardent Christians causes him to denounce the Deity in very forcible manner. But political oppression calls forth the most indignant responses from the angry poets. The surprise and sorrow evoked at the thought of ruthless despotism soon change to the bitter indignation found in the sonnets of Pringle and Southey on slavery. Hatred of a definite monarch of his own time produces Binyon's vehement denunciations of the German War Lords and Walter Arensberg's beautiful and forcible sonnet, "Am Tag".

Thus from this collection of sonnets we have found a few beautiful ones which express indignation. Their comparative rarity leads us to further investigation concerning the fitness of the sonnet form for the expression of indignation. The remaining large majority of the sonnets which we have considered fail to observe Waddington's dictum that, "in all cases one idea, one thought, one mood, must pervade and govern the whole".¹ In order to account for their failure to comply with such a commonly accepted regulation, we must consider briefly the nature of this emotion, termed indignation. It is a feeling of great, but varying intensity and of uncertain duration. Therefore a sonnet imbued with indignation would rarely have that uniformity of emotion from line to line which Noble² and the other critics demand. Furthermore, because indignation is transitory in nature the poet revealing it in a sonnet could not adhere to Wordsworth's valuable dictum that poetry "takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity".³ The sonneteer attempting to recall the burning indignation which some event of yesterday had roused would call up an emotion lacking the spontaneity and force of natural indignation. This vain striving for the anger which has passed away

¹ Waddington, Samuel; "English Sonnets by Poets of the Past", (ed. 1882, p. x).

² Of the sonnet Noble writes that, "it must have its every line strong, its every word harmonious: it must be concentrated yet clear, compact yet fluent; and while every phrase and image is in itself a joy giving thing of beauty, every member must remain in sweet subordination to the total effect and impression of the whole." Noble, J. A.; "The sonnet in England and other Essays", (ed. 1896, p. 17)

³ Smith, Nowell C.; "Wordsworth's Literary Criticism", (ed. 1905, p. 34).

The American Medical Association is a non-profit corporation organized for the purpose of promoting the interests of the medical profession and the public. It is composed of members who are physicians, dentists, nurses, and other health workers. The Association's primary concern is the advancement of the medical profession and the improvement of the health of the people. It does this by publishing the Journal of the American Medical Association, which is one of the most authoritative and comprehensive medical journals in the world. The Journal contains articles on the latest medical research, clinical experience, and public health issues. It also includes news, reports, and correspondence from the medical community. The Association also publishes other journals, such as the American Journal of Surgery, the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and the American Journal of Roentgenology. These journals are also highly respected and influential in the medical field.

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we have found in such sonnets as David Reeve Arnell's "Poetry" and "Bigotry", William Mason's Sonnet XI, and the vast majority of Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Sonnets.

In addition to the general incompatibility of indignation to the nature of the sonnet, we find many purely technical difficulties. The sonnet is a verse form of definite length, metre, and rhythm. Indignation, unlike love, is a passion which leads the poet to portray his feelings with slight regard for the form of his utterance. Love is an emotion naturally seeking some beautiful, artistic mode of expression. Therefore the sonnet is especially suitable for its portrayal. Almost the opposite is true of indignation. In several of Sir Thomas Wyatt's sonnets, Sir Philip Sidney's formal reproof of Lord Rich, and the Reverend W. W. Carr's mild censure of "Folly" we find that the poet has consciously curbed emotion in order to adhere to form. The results are manifestly disappointing. On the other hand, when the poet has given free reign to the flow of his emotion, form and style show marked irregularity. Of such Frances Anne Butler's sonnets, Wordsworth's "When looking on the present face of things" and Coleridge's "Pitt" afford excellent illustrations.

It is therefore clear that the sonnet is not the best verse form for the expression of the indignation motive, despite the few notables, exceptions such as Shakespeare's Sonnet #152, Milton's truly indignant sonnets, and the forceful denunciations of the Germans by Binyon and Arensberg. But the rhymed couplet, a form of simple technique and few restrictions, has been used

very successfully for the portrayal of indignation by such eminent satirists as Dryden, Pope, and Lord Byron. When we consider such eminently forceful satires as "Mac Flecknoe", "The Dunciad", and "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" in contrast with the great bulk of supposedly indignant sonnets, we are forced to admit that the rhymed couplet is far more suitable for the expression of indignation than the sonnet. In the hands of a Milton the latter may be successfully used for this purpose, but for inferior men it has proved a frequent stumbling-block.

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